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TAGS: PREL PGOV ECON PTER PINS I2

SUBJECT: ANBAR PROVINCIAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN SHARES  
PROVINCIAL - GOI RECONCILIATION IDEAS WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: A. 06JUN08 UNCLASS O/I  
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Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

I1. (C) Summary: Meeting with the Ambassador on July 1, Anbar Provincial Council Chairman Dr. Abdulsalam Abdullah Mohammad Al-Ani discussed ideas to improve relations between the central and provincial government, the Anbar Provincial Council's (PC) ongoing struggle with the Ministry of Interior to resolve the dispute over the coveted Principal Chief of Police (PCOP) position, continuing power generation deficiencies in the province, and the long-term need for USG civilian assistance during the anticipated drawdown of the U.S. military in the province. The Ambassador congratulated Abdulsalam as Anbar approaches Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), and encouraged him to continue promoting reconciliation efforts that send a positive signal that Iraqis are coming together. End Summary.

How to Improve Relations with the GOI

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I2. (C) Anbar Provincial Council Chairman Dr. Abdulsalam Abdullah Mohammed Al-Ani called on the Ambassador on July 1 having just recently returned from his trip to the U.S. as part of the joint Sunni-Shi'a Sheikhs International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP). Referring to the paper the IVLP group passed to President Bush during their June 3 meeting in Washington -- entitled "The Basis on Which to Build the New Iraq: The View of the Tribes of Iraq" (Ref A) -- Abdulsalam discussed next steps to promote further provincial progress, including improving provincial relations with the GOI. He suggested bringing provincial and tribal leaders to Baghdad for a conference with GOI ministry officials to help improve coordination and communication between the central government and provincial governments. He said it is critical to combat tribal leaders' perceptions that the GOI does not want to help the provinces and is "closed" to certain groups. He added, "Sheikhs all around Iraq want to meet and work with the GOI." The Ambassador agreed this was an excellent idea which the USG would support, but emphasized that this should be an Iraqi-led effort.

Pending PC Resolution on PCOP Status Stirs Controversy

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I3. (C) Abdulsalam raised the issue of a pending PC resolution to dismiss interim Provincial Chief of Police (PCOP) Tariq Youssef. The PC voted on May 27 to dismiss Tariq after he was accused of failure to cooperate with the PC and of security breeches. According to PRT Anbar sources, there is wide speculation that the PC actually sought to remove Tariq after he reportedly followed a Ministry of Interior (MOI) order to send an Iraqi Police (IP) battalion to Mosul to help with security operations. Tariq further upset the PC when he did not respond to its request to appear before the Council to discuss the matter. The PRT later discovered that the MOI had not consulted Tariq about the police movement.

¶4. (C) Abdulsalam voiced frustration that the PCOP issue is another example of how the GOI has been nonresponsive to provincial requests for assistance, and shows that the GOI does not respect provincial authority. (Note: This has been an ongoing political battle since October 2007 when Tariq was named interim PCOP after the Iraq Awakening Movement, or Sahawat al Iraq (SAI) managed to oust the previous Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)-backed police chief but was unable to garner enough support to give Tariq the job outright. End Note) (Ref B). Describing it as a "disturbing situation," Abdulsalam said the PC has been excluded from any security-related decisions. However, he said that during a June 30 meeting, Interior Minister Jawad Al-Boulani had promised the MOI would work towards a solution.

Power Generation Deficiencies Continue

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¶5. (C) The Ambassador inquired about the state of Abdulsalam's relationships with other ministries and directors general. Abdulsalam said they were fine except for the Ministry of Electricity. He appealed for the Ambassador's intervention with Deputy Prime Minister Barhem Salih, who had thrown his support behind a generator park proposal for Anbar, which was later rejected by the Prime Minister's Contract Committee. Abdulsalam said that Anbar needs USD 120 million to build generator parks in Ramadi and Fallujah, but that the Ministry of Electricity has been nonresponsive. He complained that Anbar had only received USD 70 million as part of the supplemental versus the other provinces that he claimed received substantially larger

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amounts. The Embassy has since learned that Anbar Governor Ma'amoun and Deputy Governor Othman plan to travel to Baghdad on July 2 to discuss the rejected proposal with the Contract Committee.

Appeal for Continuing USG Civilian Assistance

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¶6. (C) Abdulsalam emphasized that Anbar is still in need of substantial USG assistance, characterizing current progress as being in "slow motion." He said that naturally there is a level of anxiety as the military transitions out of Anbar given its reputation of moving quickly on issues, but reiterated his support and appreciation for the hard work of the PRT and ePRTs.

Anbaris Leading the Way

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¶7. (C) The Ambassador congratulated Abdulsalam on the successful visit of the joint Sunni-Shi'a Sheikhs IVLP trip to the U.S. in early June, citing it as a great model of Iraqi reconciliation efforts. The Ambassador said that the group, through its many interactions with USG executive and congressional leaders, sent a positive message that Iraqis are serious about coming together and encouraged Abdulsalam to work towards broader engagements of groups. He also commended Abdulsalam for the progress Anbar has made over the last 18 months, adding that there is probably not another Provincial Council that has faced more adversity than the Anbar PC, which in early 2007 had been forced to meet in Baghdad due to insurgent threats.

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